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(54) Method and apparatus for exposure of substrates

Verfahren und Vorrichtung zur Belichtung von Substraten

Méthode et dispositif pour l'exposition de substrats

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(56) References cited:
EP-A- 0 052 892 **EP-A- 0 206 804**
DE-A- 4 031 418

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Description

The invention relates to a method according to the preamble of claim 1 and an apparatus according to the preamble of claim 23.

Such method and apparatus are known from the EP-A-0 206 804. According to the known method and apparatus a precise incrementing of the pattern is achieved by the positioning of a reference element during the active laserscanning and the locking the reference element in position. The substrate on which the pattern is formed is then quickly advanced into contact with the reference element during the short reversal of time of the scanning device.

The DE-A-40 31 418 describes also laser beam scanning system in which a substrate on which the pattern is written is movable in a first direction and the scanning laser beam in second direction perpendicular to the first direction. The correction of the relative position between the substrate and the laser scanning beam is achieved by moving the scanning device from which the laser beam is emitted.

When making a mask, a pattern is exposed in photoresist on an opaque film of chromium on a glass substrate. In a develop-and-etch process the resist in the exposed areas is removed and the unprotected chromium is dissolved by a chromium etchant. The result, a glass plate with a pattern in opaque chromium, is used as an optical contact or projection mask for production of the conductor pattern on the glass plates of LCD display. The glass plates are coated with photoresist and exposed through the optical chromium mask. In this way highly complex patterns can be written on the mask and reproduced on the glass plates at an acceptable production cost in high volumes.

Large-area or "flat-panel" LCD displays have two unusual characteristics: there is a demand for large sizes, at present 450 x 450 mm, in the future larger than 1000 x 1000 mm, and high dimensional accuracy is needed. For so-called active matrix display with an active transistor in each image element, the complexity and the required accuracy is very high. Elements down to a size of 5 microns must be written and the maximum permissible geometrical errors are of the order 1 part per million i.e. 0,5 micron maximum error in a 500 x 500 mm plate.

A further application of the invention is for direct exposure, i.e. exposure directly on the glass plates used in the displays without the intermediate step of making a mask. This is mainly of interest for prototypes and low-volume products. The requirements are similar, but higher writing speed is needed.

Chromium masks of a smaller size, but with similar requirements on complexity and accuracy, are used by the semiconductor (IC) industry. These patterns are written by either scanning laser beams (US-A-4,455,485), or by electron beams. The typical exposure tool which is shown by Figure 1, has a stage 1 moving

in the x and y directions under a fixed writing head 2, 3. The moving range of the stage 1 is of the order of 150 by 150 mm. The position of the stage relative to the writing optics is measured by laser interferometers and corrected in real-time using servo motors. The pattern is written by so-called raster scanning, i.e. forming a regular grid of closely spaced pixels covering the entire surface. During the data preparation the geometrical shapes are converted to a pattern of intensity variation over the pixel grid. In the most common writing scheme, so-called write-on-the-fly, the stage 1 moves mechanically (mechanical motion 4) at a constant speed along x under the writing head. In the writing head there is a scanning (so-called sub-scanning) mechanism 2 that makes the beam 5 scan in the y direction 6, and a so-called stripe 7 is "painted" (on a substrate 10). Early laser scanners did not have the sub-scanning feature, but the speed requirements of today makes it necessary to form stripes 7, that are 250 - 5000 pixels wide, for each mechanical stroke 4. When one stripe is finished, the stage 1 retraces and moves by mechanical step-by-step movement 9 to the next stripe. Thus there is a fast continuous mechanical motion 4, a fast perpendicular sub-scanning 6 and a slow, usually stepping, mechanical movement 9 in the same direction as the sub-scanning. A laser beam scanning system of that type is described also in the EP-A-0 052 892.

Scaling a typical IC pattern generator up to the large size needed for flat panel masks results in a large and heavy machine. The position accuracy needed makes a solid stage design necessary; a non-flat stage or a stage that sags at the ends of the scanning stroke give unacceptable position errors. Furthermore, to attenuate mechanical vibrations and control the thermal expansion, materials of choice for the stage is massive granit and low-expansion ceramics.

As an example a writer for 600 x 600 mm plates 10 would have an xy-stage consisting of an x stage 1, an y stage 11, and a supporting frame 12, would occupy an area of 1200 x 1400 mm. The slow movement 9 would be done by the y stage 11, a slab of granit measuring 1200 x 600 x 150 mm and weighing 250 kg. The fast mechanical movement is done by the x stage 1 which is 620 x 620 x 25 mm and weighs 25 kg. The substrate 10 alone can weigh up to 6 kg. The supporting structure 12, i.e. the large block of granit on which the y stage moves, would have to be dimensioned solid enough take up the inertial forces of the moving masses and the whole machine would weigh of the order of 2000 kg. The size of the machine is an important economic parameter not only during manufacture and transport, but also during operation since it has to be operated in a particle-free environment where the floor-space is expensive. Another problem with a straight-forward up-scaling is that the stage servos become slow due to the large masses that have to be moved.

The problem to be solved by the invention is to simplify the correct positioning of the writing laser light rel-

ative to the photosensitive surface.

This is achieved by the invention as described in the claims 1 and 23.

The dependent claims describe particular embodiments of the invention.

The features of the invention as described in the claims guarantee a reduced size, weight and power consumption of the machine. Because of the reduced inertia of the moving parts the machine can operate at higher mechanical speeds than a comparable conventional system. Smaller moving masses also reduce all mechanical transients, thus making the operation quieter and the position feedback systems faster. A secondary benefit is that the design is modular. The stage and support frame are completely independent from the guiding rail and the carriage. Machines for different writing formats can be built with identical carriages and with identical guiding rails and control systems. A way to increase the writing speed is to put two writing heads and two rail modules on a single support frame. It is then possible either to use the two heads in parallel, or to move the stage at a continuous speed and let the two writing heads work alternately. In the latter case the laser power and the datahandling capacity of the electronics can be utilized 100 % of the time with no interruptions for mechanical retraces, and the continuous movement reduces the inertial forces further.

There is shown a way of reducing the size and weight of a laser pattern generator for particularly large substrates. Furthermore the moving masses are reduced by an order of magnitude. While a conventionally design for a writing format of 600 x 600 is impractically large, and would hardly be possible at all for the format 1000 x 1000 mm, the invention is readily scalable to large sizes.

According to a preferred embodiment, the carriage can slide on air bearings on the guiding rail and the carriage can be driven by a linear electric motor. According to a further improvement a simplification of the position feedback system for solving practical problems is obtained. In conventional systems laser interferometers measure the position of the stage relative to mirrors on the lens. The stage has long interferometer mirrors, flat to a fraction of a wavelength and extending over the movement range of the stage, i.e. typically 180 mm long for a 150 x 150 mm stage. The interferometer signals are compared to the desired positions by control electronics, and correcting signals are applied to the servo motors. There exists a number of problems when this scheme is applied to a large-area writer: the mirrors are difficult to manufacture, the control loops are slow due to the weight of the stage. A further improvement is obtained by measuring the lateral position of the stage relative to the focussing lens and applying corrections to the position of the focussed laser light during the writing procedure. The measurement can be done by laser interferometry.

According to the improvement, the position feed-

back is not applied to the stage, but to the position of the writing beam. Small displacements can be created by delaying the data relative to the scanning movements. Alternately, and more suitably in some implementations, the data can be modified to displace the pattern according to the error information from the interferometers.

Larger displacements are created by mechanical movement of the focussing lens. Moving the focussing lens is equivalent to moving the beam the same distance, everything else being constant. Of particular interest is to move the focussing lens by moving the ends of the guiding rail for correction of positioning errors.

A further explanation of the invention is given in connection with the attached drawing on which

FIG. 1	shows a well-known apparatus,
FIG. 2	shows an embodiment of the apparatus according to the invention,
FIG. 3a and 3b	show a part of the embodiment in FIG. 2 in detail,
FIG. 4	shows another part of the embodiment in FIG. 2 in detail, and
FIG. 5a, 5b, 5c	show schematically the arrangement of spots within of stripe of the pattern to be generated by the apparatus according to the invention.

Figure 2 shows an embodiment of the invention. In this embodiment, a stage 13 on which the substrate 10 is placed moves in only one direction 9, the slow direction y. The writing head including an optical system 2 for generating stripes and focussing optics 3 is placed on a carriage 14 that slides in a continuous motion 15 along a guiding rail 15 along an essentially direction x. The parts moving with the carriage 14 are shown shaded in Figure 2. The support at the far end of the rail is omitted for visibility. This is the fast mechanical movement and since the carriage 14 can be built much lighter and more compact than the stage top 1 (Figure 1) of a conventionally designed system, the inertial energy can be reduced by an order of magnitude. The optical system 2 generates a stripe, i.e. typically several hundred pixels are written in the y direction for each x position along the guiding rail 16. The light beam is generated by a laser 17 mounted on a fixed frame 18 and a laser beam 20 is expanded, collimated and launched by an optical system 19 in a direction parallel to the guiding rail 16, so that it hits pick-up optics 21 of the carriage 14 with unchanging lateral position, angle and cross-section during the movement along the rail.

Figures 3a and 3b explain the expanding of the beam before launching it towards the carriage 14. A laser beam 20 of good quality has a Gaussian waist 61 where the diameter of the beam is at a minimum. At the waist 61 the wavefront 67 of the beam is flat, but moving

a way from the waist 61 one finds that the wavefront 60 curves. This is equivalent to an apparent source distance of infinity at the waist and at a finite distance away from the waist. The apparent source distance effects the true position of focus 62 after the focussing lens 3. When the carriage 14 with the final focussing lens 3, the stripe-forming optics 2 and the beam pick-up optics 21 mounted on it slides along the rail 16 the curvature of the wavefront changes, so that the true focus is below the surface of the substrate 10 at the far end 62 of the movement range and above it at the near end 65. The curvature variation is determined by the wavelength and the diameter at the waist 61, and with an unexpanded laser beam the useful range 66 is less than the mechanical stroke 63. With the wider waist 68 (Figure 3b) produced after a beam expander the wavefront is everywhere flatter, the focus shift is smaller and the acceptable range 69 is larger than the mechanical stroke 63.

The necessary size of the beam depends on the mechanical stroke, the wavelength and the focal depth of the lens. At 442 nm wavelength, a stroke of 600 mm and a focal depth of $\pm 2,5 \mu\text{m}$ a suitable $1/e^2$ diameter is 3,5 mm. The $1/e^2$ diameter, a commonly used measure for laser beams is the diameter where the intensity is $1/e^2$ ($= 13,53 \%$) of the intensity at the center of the beam.

A further improvement of the invention is a simplification of the position feedback system. According to the embodiment, shown in Figure 4, the position feed-back is not applied to the stage 13, but to the control of the position of the focussing lens 3. Moving the lens 3 is equivalent to moving the focussed laser beam 5 the same distance, everything else being constant. Of particular interest is to move the focussing lens 3 by moving the ends of the guiding rail 16.

Figure 4 shows in a top view of the machine how non-straight motion (exaggerated) and mechanical vibrations of the stage 13 are measured and compensated. The distance between a retroreflector 40 on the stage (the measurement arm of the interferometer) and another one 41 mounted on the guiding rail 16 (the reference arm) is measured by an interferometer 42. When the stage 13 is positioned for a new stripe a servo motor 44 is driven until the position error is within an acceptance range. The remaining position error and the angle error of the stage 13, due to the non-perfect guiding structures 45, are calculated from the readings of the two interferometers 42 and 43. The errors are compensated by two mechanism: a fast electronic servo and a slower mechanical one. Small errors are corrected by an electronic displacement of the written data relative to the stripe, either by a real-time modification of the data stream, or in the case of stripe formation through sub-scanning by delaying the data relative to the timing of the subscan. Larger errors are corrected by a mechanical displacement of the beam by a steering mirror before the final lens or by a mechanical displacement of the lens itself. Of particular interest is the mechanical

servo system of Figure 4. The position of the lens 3 is affected by a movement of the ends of the guiding rail 16. After the stage 13 has positioned itself approximately at the position for the next stripe, the rail 16 is moved to the exact location and turned to the exact angle by the two piezoelectric actuators 46 working against the force of the two stiff springs 47 mounted in the fixed frame 18. The actuators 46 are controlled by analogue voltages from a feed-back circuit 34 using the interferometer signals as input. After the feedback has settled on zero position error the guide is positioned at the correct position for next stripe 7, but vibrations and non-straightness in the rail 16 still needs to be compensated for. This is done by a combination of electronic displacements and movements by the actuators 46.

The accuracy of the system depends on two factors: first, the stiffness and lack of mechanical play in the air bearings 22 (Figure 2), and secondly, that the rail 16 does not bend by any appreciable amount. Since there are no forces acting on the carriage 14 it follows any movements of the ends of the guiding rail 16 with a time constant essentially determined by the mechanical bending resonance of the rail 16 and the stiffness of the air bearings 22. With a properly designed rail 16 it is satisfactory to apply the position corrections to the ends of the rail 16, and the movement of final lens (focussing lens 3) will follow the ends of the rail 16 in an accurate way.

A long mirror in the y direction which is needed in conventional systems is replaced by a retroreflector 48 mounted on a ruler 49 that senses the edge of the stage 13. An air bearing 33 between the ruler 49 and the stage 13 makes the ruler 49 follow an average position of the edge without need to polish the edge to the surface finish of an interferometer mirror. As a reference mirror is a retroreflector 31 mounted on the assembly including the focussing optics 3. An interferometer 32 sends timing information to the writing optics included by the optical system 2 (Figure 2), so that the data is written when the focussing lens 3 passes the correct position.

The benefit of this embodiment is again that smaller masses have to be moved by the control system. It also gives a simpler design without the long delicate mirrors and adds to the modularity of the invention, by putting the position feedback in the rail unit. The requirements on the slow stage are relaxed and makes it easy to modify the stage for special-purpose machines.

Figures 5a, 5b, 5c explain a method by which the stripes 7 are generated, whereas a stripe is at least 100 pixels wide. One element of the invention is a mechanical scheme that allows high mechanical speed with acceptable power consumption and smooth operation. The other element is the writing of a large number of pixels spaced across the fast mechanical axis for each position along the guiding rail 16. It is the combination of these elements that gives the desirable characteristics of small footprint, low power consumption, quiet operation and high writing speed.

Figures 5a, 5b, 5c show the basic requirements for the stripe generation: Instead of a single focus spot 50 the optics generates an array of spots 51 at the photo-sensitive surface, exposed simultaneously, in sequence or a combination of both thus forming an extended focus area 52. Different spots 50, 53 can be individually controlled. They can be distributed in a line, several lines or an array within the focus area 52, but they are spaced in the direction perpendicular to the direction of mechanical scan 54 caused by movement of the carriage 14 along arrow 15 in Figure 2. Figure 5b shows how the mechanical scanning of the array 54 in Figure 5a forms a surface-filling pattern in a stripe 55 corresponding to one of the stripes 7 in Figure 2 during the scanning. The Figure 5b shows the pixels exposed at each of seven consecutive positions along the mechanical scanning direction 54. In Figure 5c the focus spots are individually controlled to expose a pattern 56.

It is necessary to find a way to generate a stripe which does not generate vibrations and which is compatible with a moving low-mass carriage 14. One such vibration-free methods of stripe formation is acousto-optic subscanning, as disclosed in US-PS 4,455,485. The acousto-optic subscanning can be performed by the stripe generating optics 2 of the writing head. The beam makes a full acousto-optic scan along the y axis for each position along x and 250 - 1000 are exposed sequentially. The acousto-optical deflector is preferably placed on the carriage 14 within the optic 2 together with the final focussing optics 3 while the modulator may be a part of the optics 19 on the fixed support frame 18. Another appropriate writing optics is described in DE-A-40 22 732.

Other methods for creating a stripe with compact non-moving components are discussed by David L. Hecht in "Multibeam Acoustooptic and Elektrooptic Modulators", Xerox Corporation, Palo Alto Research Center, pages 2 to 9. Several such methods can be designated by the generic term spatial light modulator (SLM). An SLM is a light valve with many elements operated in parallel. The light transmission of each element can be controlled independently from other elements. Examples are arrays of LCD cells and the electrooptic device described in Reference 2. In the invention an SLM is illuminated by a laser beam and an image of the SLM is formed on the photosensitive surface. The SLM is preferably mounted on the carriage.

A preferred embodiment of the invention is a writer for patterns up to 600 by 600 mm. The supporting frame 18 is formed by a granit block and has the measures 600 x 1200 x 150 mm. On it there is the stage 13 with the measures 620 x 620 x 25 mm, weighing 25 kg. Over the stage 13 there is the guiding rail 16. 700 mm long with a hollow 100 x 100 mm cross-section. The weight of the guide with supports is 10 kg and on it there is a 100 mm long carriage 14 weighing 2 kg including the optical components 2, 3, 21. The carriage slides on stiff air-bearings 22 along the rail 16. In a recess in the rail

there is a linear motor 23 driving the carriage 14 along the rail 16.

Compared to a conventional design the preferred embodiments of the invention halves the floor-space requirement and reduces the moving masses by a factor of ten. In particular the fast scanning is done by the carriage weighing 2 kg compared to the stage top weighing 25 kg in the conventional design.

The stage 13 is driven by a stepping motor 44 through a ball-nut, so that the stage can be positioned at a large number of discrete, but not necessarily accurate, positions along its movement range 9. No fine-positioning exists on the stage, but instead its actual position is measured and compensated for by mechanical and electronic servos.

At each end support of the guiding rail 16 there is the piezoelectric actuator 46 displacing the rail 16 in the y direction. The actuators 46 are driven by analog voltages from a control system including the interferometers 42, 43 and the feedback circuit 34 sensing the position of the rail 16 relative to that of the stage 13 by interferometry. Together the two actuators 46 correct for the limited resolution in the stepping motor 44 and for non-straight travel of the stage 13. Each actuator 46 has the movement range 100 μ m and works on a maximum inertial load of 7 kg and the response time is acceptable.

The carriage 14 slides smoothly on the air bearings 22 along the guiding rail 16. It is driven by the linear electric motor 23 and except for electric cables and air supply tubes there is no physical contact between the rail 16 and the carriage 14. The only forces acting on it are from the contact-less motor 23 and from inertia.

In order to compensate errors concerning the straightness of the guiding rail 16 a calibration is possible. After the machine is assembled one has to write a test plate and measure the writing errors. The errors are stored in a calibration file and fed to the control system as a compensation during subsequent writing. The same applies to the straightness of the edge of the stage 13 against which the ruler 49 slides.

The stripe 7 (Figure 2) or 55 (Figure 5b) is formed by acousto-optical scanning in the y direction by an acousto-optical deflector in the stripe generating optics 2 mounted immediately above the focussing lens 3. The pixels are 1 x 1 μ m und each stripe is 512 μ m wide. The lens is an NA=0,14 flatfield-corrected lens with 12 mm focal-length. The pixel rate is 40 million pixels per second, and the scanning frequency of the deflector is 50 kHz. The fine-positioning in the x direction is based on the timing of the start of each acousto-optical scan. The interferometer logic connected to the interferometer 32 issues a start-of-scan pulse when the focussing lens 3 is at the correct position. In the y direction the mechanical servos described above are supplemented by a data-delay feature which moves the data along the acousto-optical scan as described in DE-A-40 22 732. This is equivalent to an inertia-free feed-forward control system raising the bandwidth of the position control to

above 100 Hz.

Allowable angle deviations from stroke to stroke are only about 10 microradians, and there must not be any focus shift along the stroke. This is solved in the preferred embodiments in a number of ways. First, the carrier runs on air bearings preloaded to high stiffness, so that the position of the carriage 14 relative to the guiding rail 16 is well-defined and independent of external air pressure and temperature. A non-perfect guiding rail may give a writing error along the scan. However, this error can be measured during calibration, stored as a correction curve and fed to the position feed-back system for compensation during writing. To keep the focus constant one has to expand and collimate the laser beam 20 by beam-shaping optics 19 before it is launched. The beam is expanded to a $1/e^2$ diameter of at least 2,0, preferred of 3,5 mm and calculations show the focus error over a scan to be less than 0,5 μm .

A second practical problem is to make an auto-focus system that keeps the surface in focus during the stroke even on non-flat substrates. The useable focal depth is $\pm 2,5 \mu\text{m}$ and the thickness of the substrate can vary by 100 μm . Active power focus systems are known in prior art, but used in the invention they would add weight and possibly vibrations to the carriage. Instead a passive autofocus by means of an air-cushion is used. The final lens is not fixed mounted in the carriage, but is free to slide up and down. Mounted at the lower end of the lens is the air-cushion, i.e. a flat surface under which compressed air is injected. The air flow between the lens and the substrate makes the lens float approximately 20 μm above the surface of the substrate. The height of the lens above the photosensitive surface is at all times constant and a perfect focus is maintained, even if the substrate is non-flat. The weight of the focussing lens is carried, not by the carriage, but by the substrate via the air-cushion under the lens.

This invention is not limited to the preferred embodiments. In particular the use of multiple elements such as multiple beams from a single laser, multiple lasers, multiple lenses on a single carriage, multiple rails with multiple carriages on a single stage etc. are obvious ways of modifying the invention without changing the principle of function and within the scope of the claims.

Claims

1. A method for exposure of patterns described in one or several databases containing geometrical descriptions of said patterns by means of writing with a focussed laser light onto substrates which are photosensitive at the wave-length of the laser light, comprising the steps of
 - moving the substrate (10) during the writing procedure in a first direction (y) relative to a fixed frame (18);

- continuously moving the optics (3) focussing laser light on said photosensitive surface in a second direction (x) essentially perpendicular to the first direction (y);
- spreading the focussed laser light on the photosensitive surface in the first direction (y) for forming an extended focus area (52); and
- independently controlling the focussed laser light hitting more than 100 positions increments spaced in the first direction (y) across the extended focus area (52);

characterized by the steps of

- detecting the position of the substrate in the first direction (y) relative to the focussing lens (3); and
 - controlling the position of the written pattern relative to the fixed frame (18) by applying position corrections in the first direction (y) dependent of said detected position.
2. A method as set forth in claim 1, wherein collimating a beam from one or several lasers mounted on the fixed frame and launching said beam towards the moving optics in a direction parallel to the continuous movement.
 3. A method as set forth in claim 1 or 2, wherein the position detecting of the substrate is done along at least one of the two directions (x, y) of movement.
 4. A method as set forth in claim 3, wherein the position detecting is performed by laser interferometry.
 5. A method as set forth in claims 1 to 4, wherein the measurement and reference arms of at least one interferometer are of equal length when the lens is near the center of the substrate.
 6. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 5, wherein the measurement along the second direction (x) is done by laser interferometry against a mirror that is stationary in the first direction (y) and follows the movement of the substrate in the second direction (x).
 7. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 6, wherein data describing straightness errors of the substrate movement and/or focussing lens movement are generated during a calibration and used for correction during the writing procedure.
 8. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 7, wherein the timing of the writing at each position increment along the second direction (x) is synchronized to interferometer signals.

9. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 8, wherein the writing of each position increment is initiated by a synchronisation pulse generated by time interpolation of counting pulses derived from interferometer signals. 5
10. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 9, wherein the focussing lens is moved along the second direction (x) by a guiding rail and the substrate is moved along the first direction (y) by means of a stage. 10
11. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 10, wherein the position of the stage relative to the guiding rail is measured by laser interferometry. 15
12. A method as set forth claim 11, wherein the position of the stage relative to the guiding rail is measured by laser interferometry at two positions along the guiding rail. 20
13. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 12, wherein the position corrections are applied to controlling the positions of end supports of the guiding rail. 25
14. A method as set forth in claim 13, wherein the position of the rail relative to the stage is measured near each end of the rail and the position of the same end is controlled by a feedback system. 30
15. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 14, wherein the position corrections are applied by means of piezoelectric actuators. 35
16. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 15, wherein position errors in the y-direction are corrected by a real-time electronic displacement of the pattern data described in the one or several databases. 40
17. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 16, wherein data describing shape errors of the guiding rail are generated during calibration and used for correction during writing. 45
18. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 17, wherein auxiliary correction data, describing size and shape errors of the substrate and/or the exact position of the substrate on the stage, are used for correction during writing. 50
19. A method as set forth in claims 7, 17 or 18, wherein the correction data are generated by analysis of the reflection of the laser light. 55
20. A method as set forth in any of the claims 2 to 19, wherein the laser beam is expanded to a $1/e^2$ diameter larger than 2,0 mm before it is launched.
21. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 20, wherein the extended focus area is generated by acousto-optic deflection in a direction essentially parallel to the first movement direction (y).
22. A method as set forth in any of the claims 1 to 21, wherein the extended focus area is generated as an image of a spatial light modulator illuminated by the laser beam.
23. An apparatus for exposure of pattern, described in one or several databases containing geometrical data, by means of focussed laser light onto a substrate which are photosensitive to the wavelength of the laser light comprising
- a fixed support frame (18);
 - a stage (13) carrying the substrate (10), said stage (13) being mechanically moveable in a first direction (y) on said fixed support frame (18);
 - a guiding rail (16) essentially fixed on said support frame (18);
 - a carriage (14) carrying focussing optics (3) is sliding in a continuous movement in a second direction (x) perpendicularly to the first direction (y) on said guiding rail (16);
 - one or several laser sources (17) and means (19) for launching a laser beam energy (20) towards the carriage (14) in a direction parallel to the second (x);
 - spreading means (2) for spreading the focussed laser light over an extended focus area (52) in the direction of the stage movement (first direction); and
 - controlling means for independently controlling the exposure at more than 100 position increments spaced in the first direction over the extended focus area (52);
- characterized by
- a position feedback system consisting of
 - measuring means (40,41,42,43) for measuring the lateral position of the stage (13) relative to the position of the focussing optics (3) in the first direction (y); and
 - controlling means for applying correction signals to correction means (46) for controlling the position of the written pattern relative to the supporting frame (18).
24. An apparatus according to claim 23, wherein air bearings (22) are disposed between the carriage

(14) and the guiding rail (16).

25. An apparatus according to claim 23, wherein a linear electric motor (23) is provided for driving the carriage (14) along the guiding rail (16). 5
26. An apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein the feed-back correction signals are applied to correction means (46) at the end supports of the guiding rail (16). 10
27. An apparatus as set forth in claim 26, wherein the correction means (46) are piezoelectric actuators.
28. An apparatus as set forth in any of the claims 23 to 27, wherein at least two measuring means (42, 43) for measuring the position of the stage (13) relative to the guiding rail (16) at two positions along the guiding rail (16) are provided. 15
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29. An apparatus as set forth in any of the claims 23 to 28 with at least one additional measuring means (48, 49, 50) for measuring the position of the stage (13) relative to the focussing optics (3) using one mirror on the carriage and another mirror sensing the position of the edge of the stage by means of an air bearing (33). 25
30. An apparatus as set forth in claim 23, wherein an air cushion between the final lens and the surface of the substrate (10) is provided. 30
31. An apparatus as set forth in any of the claims 23 to 30 comprising expanding optics (19) mounted on the support frame (18) for expanding the laser beam to a $1/e^2$ diameter larger than 2,0 mm. 35
32. An apparatus as set forth in any of the claims 23 to 31, wherein the spreading means (2) are mounted on the carriage (14). 40
33. An apparatus as set forth in any of the claims 23 to 32, wherein the spreading means (2) is an acousto-optical deflector deflecting the beam in a direction essentially perpendicular to the guiding rail (16) or second direction (x). 45
34. An apparatus as set forth in any of the claims 23 to 31, wherein the spreading means (2) is a spatial light modulator and the extended focus area (52) is an image of the spatial light modulator. 50

Patentansprüche

1. Verfahren zur Belichtung mit Mustern, die in einer oder mehreren, geometrische Aufzeichnungen der Muster enthaltenden Datenbanken aufgezeichnet

sind, durch Schreiben mit fokussiertem Laserlicht auf Substrate, die bei der Wellenlänge des Laserlichtes lichtempfindlich sind, mit den Schritten, bei denen

- während des Schreibvorganges das Substrat (10) in einer ersten Richtung (y) relativ zu einem feststehenden Rahmen (18) bewegt wird;
- das optische System (3), welches das Laserlicht auf die lichtempfindliche Fläche fokussiert, kontinuierlich in einer zweiten Richtung (x) bewegt wird, die im wesentlichen senkrecht zur ersten Richtung (y) verläuft;
- das fokussierte Laserlicht entlang der ersten Richtung (y) auf die lichtempfindliche Fläche zur Bildung einer ausgedehnten Brennfläche (52) ausgebreitet wird; und
- das fokussierte Laserlicht, das auf mehr als 100 Positionsinkremente auftrifft, die in der ersten Richtung (y) entlang der ausgedehnten Brennfläche (52) in Abständen voneinander liegen, unabhängig gesteuert wird;

gekennzeichnet durch Schritte, bei denen

- die Position des Substrates in der ersten Richtung (y) relativ zur Fokussierlinse (3) erfaßt wird; und
- die Position des geschriebenen Musters relativ zum feststehenden Rahmen (18) durch das Ausführen von Positionskorrekturen in der ersten Richtung (y) in Abhängigkeit von der erfaßten Position gesteuert wird.

2. Verfahren wie im Anspruch 1 dargelegt, bei dem ein Strahl aus einem oder mehreren Lasern, die an dem feststehenden Rahmen angebracht sind, parallel gerichtet und der Strahl in einer Richtung parallel zu der kontinuierlichen Bewegung zu dem bewegbaren optischen System hin ausgerichtet wird.
3. Verfahren wie im Anspruch 1 oder 2 dargelegt, bei dem das Erfassen der Position des Substrates entlang mindestens einer der beiden Bewegungsrichtungen (x, y) ausgeführt wird.
4. Verfahren wie im Anspruch 3 dargelegt, bei dem das Erfassen der Position durch Laserinterferometrie durchgeführt wird.
5. Verfahren wie in den Ansprüchen 1 bis 4 dargelegt, bei dem die Meß- und Bezugsarme mindestens eines Interferometers von gleicher Länge sind, wenn sich die Linse nahe an der Mitte des Substrates befindet.
6. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5 dargelegt, bei dem die Messung entlang der zweiten

Richtung (x) durch Laserinterferometrie gegen einem Spiegel durchgeführt wird, der in der ersten Richtung (y) stationär ist und der Bewegung des Substrates in der zweiten Richtung (x) folgt.

7. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6 dargelegt, bei dem Daten, die Fehler bei der Geradlinigkeit der Substratbewegung und/oder der Fokussierlinsenbewegung angeben, während eines Kalibrierens erzeugt und während des Schreibvorgangs für die Korrektur verwendet werden. 5
8. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 7 dargelegt, bei dem die Zeitgebung des Schreibens an jedem Positionskrement entlang der zweiten Richtung (x) mit den Interferometersignalen synchronisiert wird. 10
9. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 8 dargelegt, bei dem das Schreiben bei jedem Positionskrement durch einen Synchronisierimpuls eingeleitet wird, der durch eine zeitliche Interpolation von Zählimpulsen erzeugt wird, die aus Interferometersignalen erhalten worden sind. 15
10. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 9 dargelegt, bei dem die Fokussierlinse von einer Führungsschiene entlang der zweiten Richtung (x) bewegt wird und das Substrat mittels eines Objektisches entlang der ersten Richtung (y) bewegt wird. 20
11. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 10 dargelegt, bei dem die Position des Objektisches relativ zur Führungsschiene durch Laserinterferometrie gemessen wird. 25
12. Verfahren wie im Anspruch 11 dargelegt, bei dem die Position des Objektisches relativ zur Führungsschiene durch Laserinterferometrie an zwei Stellen entlang der Führungsschiene gemessen wird. 30
13. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 12 dargelegt, bei dem die Positionskorrekturen bei der Steuerung der Positionen von Endträgern der Führungsschiene angewendet werden. 35
14. Verfahren wie im Anspruch 13 dargelegt, bei dem die Position der Schiene relativ zum Objektisch in der Nähe jedes Endes der Schiene gemessen und die Position des jeweiligen Endes von einem Rückkopplungssystem gesteuert wird. 40
15. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 14 dargelegt, bei dem die Positionskorrekturen mittels piezoelektrischer Stellglieder ausgeführt werden. 45
16. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 15 dargelegt, bei dem Positionsfehler in der y-Richtung

durch eine in Echtzeit erfolgende elektronische Verschiebung der in der oder den Datenbanken aufgezeichneten Musterdaten korrigiert werden.

17. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 16 dargelegt, bei dem Daten, die Formfehler der Führungsschiene angeben, während des Kalibrierens erzeugt und für die Korrektur während des Schreibens verwendet werden. 5
18. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 17 dargelegt, bei dem Hilfskorrekturdaten, die Größen- und Formfehler des Substrates und/oder die genaue Position des Substrates auf dem Objektisch angeben, für die Korrektur während des Schreibens verwendet werden. 10
19. Verfahren wie in den Ansprüchen 7, 17 oder 18 dargelegt, bei dem die Korrekturdaten durch eine Analyse der Reflexion des Laserlichtes erzeugt werden. 15
20. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 2 bis 19 dargelegt, bei dem der Laserstrahl, bevor er ausgerichtet wird, auf einen $(1/e^2)$ -Durchmesser aufgeweitet wird, der größer als 2,0 mm ist. 20
21. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 20, bei dem die ausgedehnte Brennfläche durch eine akusto-optische Ablenkung in einer Richtung im wesentlichen parallel zur ersten Bewegungsrichtung (y) erzeugt wird. 25
22. Verfahren wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 21 dargelegt, bei dem die ausgedehnte Brennfläche als ein Bild eines von dem Laserstrahl beleuchteten räumlichen Lichtmodulators erzeugt wird. 30
23. Vorrichtung zur Belichtung mit einem Muster, das in einer oder mehreren, geometrische Daten enthaltenden Datenbanken aufgezeichnet ist, durch fokussiertes Laserlicht auf ein Substrat, das für die Wellenlänge des Laserlichtes lichtempfindlich ist, mit 35
 - einem feststehenden Trägerrahmen (18);
 - einem Objektisch (13), der das Substrat (10) trägt, wobei der Objektisch (13) an dem feststehenden Trägerrahmen (18) in einer ersten Richtung (y) mechanisch bewegbar ist;
 - einer Führungsschiene (16), die im wesentlichen an dem Trägerrahmen (18) befestigt ist;
 - einem Schlitten 14, der ein fokussierendes optisches System (3) trägt und mit einer kontinuierlichen Bewegung in einer zweiten Richtung (x) senkrecht zur ersten Richtung (y) an der Führungsschiene (16) gleitbar ist;
 - einer oder mehreren Laserquellen (17) und ei-

ner Einrichtung zum Ausrichten einer Laserstrahlenergie (20) zum Schlitten (14) hin in einer Richtung, die zu der zweiten (x) parallel ist;

- einer Ausbreitungseinrichtung (2) zum Ausbreiten des fokussierten Laserlichtes über eine ausgedehnte Brennfläche in der Richtung der Objektbewegung (erste Richtung); und
- einer Steuereinrichtung zum unabhängigen Steuern der Belichtung bei mehr als 100 Positionsincrementen, die in der ersten Richtung entlang der ausgedehnten Brennfläche im Abstand voneinander liegen;

gekennzeichnet durch

- ein Positionsrückkopplungssystem, bestehend aus
 - einer Meßeinrichtung (40, 41, 42, 43) zum Messen der Seitenposition des Objektisches (13) relativ zur Position des fokussierenden optischen Systems (3) entlang der ersten Richtung (y); und
 - einer Steuereinrichtung zum Anwenden von Korrektursignalen auf eine Korrektoreinrichtung (46) zum Steuern der Position des geschriebenen Musters relativ zum Trägerahmen (18).

24. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 23, bei der Luftlager (22) zwischen dem Schlitten (14) und der Führungsschiene (16) angeordnet sind.

25. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 23, bei der ein elektrischer Linearmotor (23) zum Antreiben des Schlittens (14) entlang der Führungsschiene (16) vorgesehen ist.

26. Vorrichtung wie im Anspruch 23 dargelegt, bei der die Rückkoppel-Korrekturssignale bei Korrektoreinrichtungen (46) an den Endträgern der Führungsschiene (16) angewendet werden.

27. Vorrichtung wie im Anspruch 26 dargelegt, bei der die Korrektoreinrichtungen (46) piezoelektrische Stellglieder sind.

28. Vorrichtung wie in einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 27 dargelegt, bei der mindestens zwei Meßeinrichtungen (42, 43) zum Messen der Position des Objektisches (13) relativ zur Führungsschiene (16) an zwei Stellen entlang der Führungsschiene (16) vorgesehen sind.

29. Vorrichtung wie in einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 28 dargelegt, mit mindestens einer zusätzlichen Meßeinrichtung (48, 49, 50) zum Messen der Position des Objektisches (13) relativ zum fokussieren-

den optischen System (3) unter Verwendung eines Spiegels auf dem Schlitten und eines weiteren Spiegels, der die Position der Kante des Objektisches mittels eines Luftlagers (33) erfaßt.

30. Vorrichtung wie im Anspruch 23 dargelegt, bei der ein Luftkissen zwischen der letzten Linse und der Oberfläche des Substrates (10) vorgesehen ist.

31. Vorrichtung wie in einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 30 dargelegt, mit einem an dem Trägerahmen (18) angebrachten, optisch aufweisenden System (19) zum Aufweiten des Laserstrahles auf einen $(1/e^2)$ -Durchmesser, der größer als 2,0 mm ist.

32. Vorrichtung wie in einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 31 dargelegt, bei der die Ausbreitungseinrichtung (2) an dem Schlitten (14) angebracht ist.

33. Vorrichtung wie in einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 32 dargelegt, bei der die Ausbreitungseinrichtung (2) ein akustooptischer Ablenker ist, der den Strahl in eine Richtung im wesentlichen senkrecht zu der Führungsschiene (16) oder der zweiten Richtung (x) ablenkt.

34. Vorrichtung wie in einem der Ansprüche 23 bis 31 dargelegt, bei der die Ausbreitungseinrichtung (2) ein räumlicher Lichtmodulator und die ausgedehnte Brennfläche (52) ein Bild des räumlichen Lichtmodulators ist.

Revendications

1. Procédé pour exposer des modèles décrits dans une ou plusieurs bases de données contenant des descriptions géométriques desdits modèles au moyen d'une écriture avec une lumière laser focalisée sur des substrats qui sont photosensibles à la longueur d'onde de la lumière laser, comprenant les étapes suivantes :

- déplacer le substrat (10) pendant la procédure d'écriture dans une première direction (y) par rapport à un bâti fixe (18) ;
- déplacer continuellement l'optique (3) focalisant la lumière laser sur ladite surface photosensible dans une deuxième direction (x) essentiellement perpendiculaire à la première direction (y) ;
- étaler la lumière laser focalisée sur la surface photosensible dans la première direction (y) pour former une zone focale étendue (52) ; et
- contrôler indépendamment la lumière laser focalisée heurtant plus de 100 incréments de position espacés dans la première direction (y) en travers de la zone focale étendue (52) ;

caractérisé par les étapes suivantes :

- détecter la position du substrat dans la première direction (y) par rapport à la lentille de focalisation (3) ; et
 - contrôler la position du modèle écrit par rapport au bâti fixe (18) en appliquant des corrections de position dans la première direction (y) en fonction de ladite position détectée.
2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel on collimate un faisceau en provenance d'un ou de plusieurs lasers montés sur le bâti fixe et on projette ce faisceau en direction de l'optique mobile dans une direction parallèle au mouvement continu.
 3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans lequel la détection de la position du substrat est effectuée le long d'au moins l'une des deux directions (x, y) du mouvement.
 4. Procédé selon la revendication 3, dans lequel la détection de position est effectuée par interférométrie laser.
 5. Procédé selon les revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel les bras de mesure et de référence d'au moins un interféromètre ont la même longueur lorsque la lentille est proche du centre du substrat.
 6. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel la mesure le long de la deuxième direction (y) est effectuée par interférométrie laser contre un miroir qui est stationnaire dans la première direction (y) et qui suit le mouvement du substrat dans la deuxième direction (x).
 7. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 6, dans lequel les données décrivant des erreurs de rectitude du mouvement du substrat et/ou du mouvement de la lentille de focalisation sont générés pendant un étalonnage et utilisés à des fins de correction pendant la procédure d'écriture.
 8. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 7, dans lequel l'instant de l'écriture à chaque incrément de position le long de la deuxième direction (x) est synchronisé à des signaux d'interféromètre.
 9. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 8, dans lequel l'écriture de chaque incrément de position est initiée par une impulsion de synchronisation produite par interpolation dans le temps d'impulsions de comptage dérivées des signaux d'interféromètre.
 10. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 9, dans lequel la lentille de focalisation est déplacée le long de la deuxième direction (x) par un rail de guidage

et le substrat est déplacé le long de la première direction (y) au moyen d'une platine.

11. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 10, dans lequel la position de la platine par rapport au rail de guidage est mesurée par interférométrie laser.
12. Procédé selon la revendication 11, dans lequel la position de la platine par rapport au rail de guidage est mesurée par interférométrie laser en deux positions le long du rail de guidage.
13. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 12, dans lequel les corrections de position sont appliquées pour régler les positions des supports terminaux du rail de guidage.
14. Procédé selon la revendication 13, dans lequel la position du rail par rapport à la platine est mesurée à proximité de chaque extrémité du rail et la position de la même extrémité est commandée par un système de contre réaction.
15. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 14, dans lequel les corrections de position sont appliquées au moyen d'actionneurs piézo-électriques.
16. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 15, dans lequel les erreurs de position dans la direction des y sont corrigées par un déplacement électronique en temps réel des données du modèle décrites dans une ou plusieurs bases de données.
17. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 16, dans lequel des données décrivant des erreurs de forme du rail de guidage sont produites pendant l'étalonnage et utilisées à des fins de correction pendant l'écriture.
18. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 17, dans lequel des données de correction auxiliaires, décrivant des erreurs de dimensions et de formes du substrat et/ou de la position exacte du substrat sur la platine, sont utilisées à des fins de correction pendant l'écriture.
19. Procédé selon les revendications 7, 17 ou 18, dans lequel les données de correction sont produites par analyse de la réflexion de la lumière laser.
20. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 2 à 19, dans lequel le faisceau laser est dilaté à un diamètre $1/e^2$ plus large que 2 mm avant d'être projeté.
21. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 20, dans lequel la zone focale étendue est générée par une déviation acousto-optique dans une direction essentiellement parallèle à la première direction de

mouvement (y).

22. Procédé selon l'une des revendications 1 à 21, dans lequel la zone focale étendue est produite en tant qu'une image d'un modulateur de lumière spatiale exposée au faisceau laser.

23. Appareil pour exposition d'un modèle, décrit dans une ou plusieurs bases de données contenant des données géométriques, au moyen d'une lumière laser focalisée sur un substrat qui est photosensible à la longueur d'onde de la lumière laser, comprenant :

- un bâti support fixe (18) ;
- une platine (13) portant le substrat (10), ladite platine (13) pouvant être mécaniquement déplacée dans une première direction (y) sur ledit bâti support fixe (18) ;
- un rail de guidage (16) essentiellement fixé sur ledit bâti support (18) ;
- un chariot (14) portant une optique de focalisation (3) et coulissant dans un mouvement continu dans une deuxième direction (x) perpendiculaire à la première direction (y) sur ledit rail de guidage (16) ;
- une ou plusieurs sources laser (17) et des moyens (19) pour projeter une énergie de faisceau laser (20) en direction du chariot (14) dans une direction parallèle à la deuxième direction (x) ;
- des moyens d'étalement (2) pour étaler la lumière laser focalisée sur une zone focale étendue (52) dans la direction du mouvement de la platine (première direction) ; et
- des moyens de commande pour commander indépendamment l'exposition de plus de 100 incréments de position espacés dans la première direction sur la zone focale étendue (52) ;

caractérisé par :

- un système de contre-réaction de position comprenant :
 - des moyens de mesure (40, 41, 42, 43) pour mesurer la position latérale de la platine (13) par rapport à la position de l'optique de focalisation (3) dans la première direction (y) ; et
 - des moyens de commande pour appliquer des signaux de correction aux moyens de correction (46) pour régler la position du modèle écrit par rapport au bâti support (18).

24. Appareil selon la revendication 23, dans lequel des paliers pneumatiques (22) sont disposés entre le

chariot (14) et le rail de guidage (16).

25. Appareil selon la revendication 23, dans lequel un moteur électrique linéaire est procuré pour entraîner le chariot (14) le long du rail de guidage (16).

26. Appareil selon la revendication 23, dans lequel les signaux de correction de contre-réaction sont appliqués à des moyens de correction (46) au niveau des supports terminaux du rail de guidage (16).

27. Appareil selon la revendication 26, dans lequel les moyens de correction (46) sont des actionneurs piézo-électriques.

28. Appareil selon l'une des revendications 23 à 27, dans lequel il est prévu au moins deux moyens de mesure (42, 43) pour mesurer la position de la platine (13) par rapport au rail de guidage (16) au niveau de deux positions le long du rail de guidage (16).

29. Appareil selon l'une des revendications 23 à 28, avec au moins un moyen de mesure additionnel (48, 49, 50) pour mesurer la position de la platine (13) par rapport à l'optique de focalisation (3) en utilisant un miroir sur le chariot et un autre miroir détectant la position du bord de la platine au moyen d'un palier pneumatique (33).

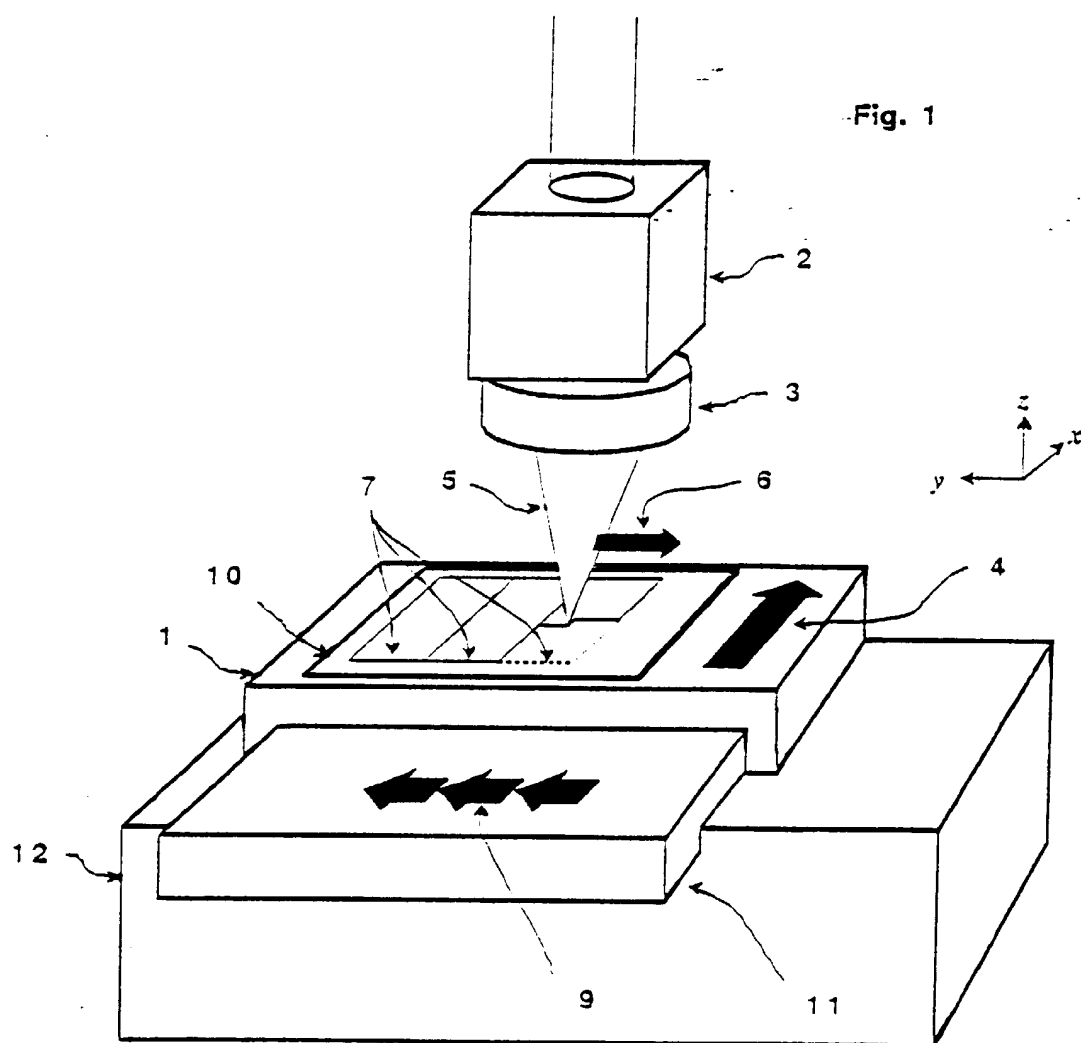
30. Appareil selon la revendication 23, dans lequel il est prévu un coussin d'air entre la lentille finale et la surface du substrat (10).

31. Appareil selon l'une des revendications 23 à 30, comprenant une optique de dilatation (19) montée sur le bâti support (18) pour dilater le faisceau laser à un diamètre $1/e^2$ plus grand que 2,0 mm.

32. Appareil selon l'une des revendications 23 à 31, dans lequel le moyen d'étalement (2) est monté sur le chariot (14).

33. Appareil selon l'une des revendications 23 à 32, dans lequel le moyen d'étalement (2) est un déflexeur acousto-optique déviant le faisceau dans une direction essentiellement perpendiculaire au rail de guidage (16) ou deuxième direction (x).

34. Appareil selon l'une des revendications 23 à 31, dans lequel le moyen d'étalement (2) est un modulateur de lumière spatiale et la zone focale étendue (52) est une image du modulateur de lumière spatiale.



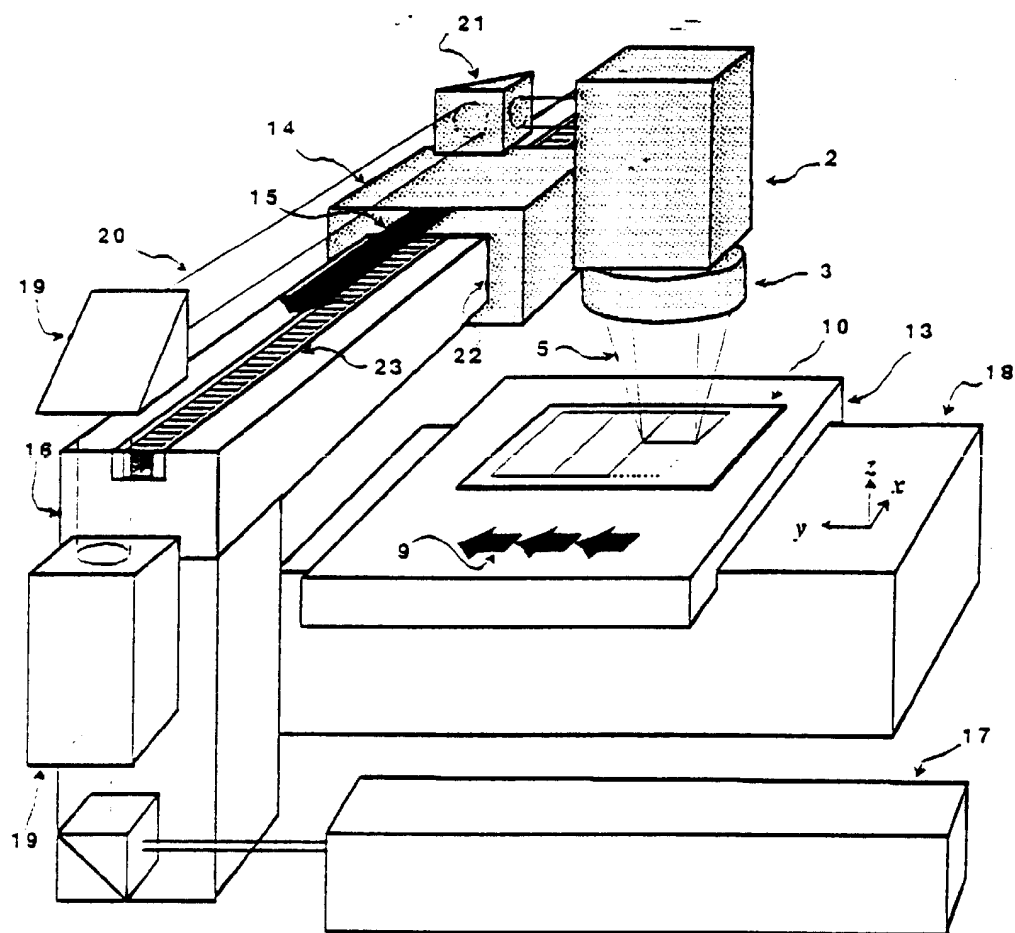


Fig. 2

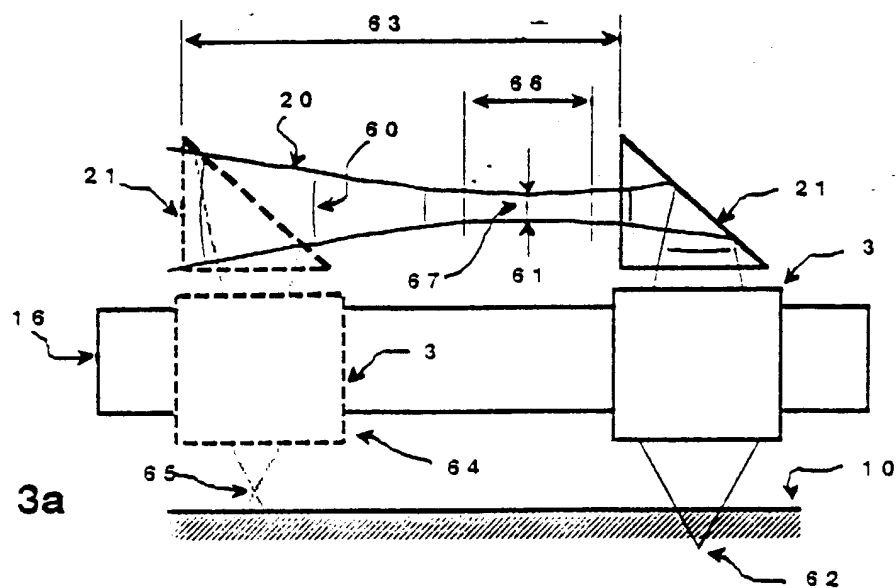


Fig. 3a

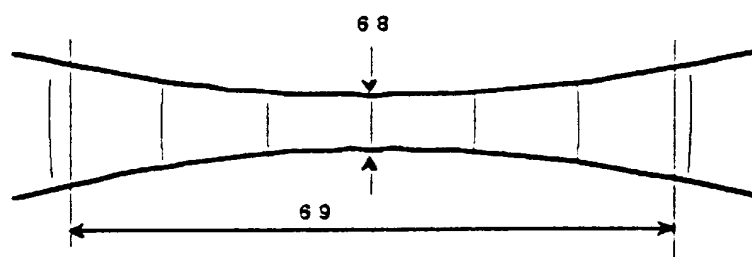


Fig. 3b

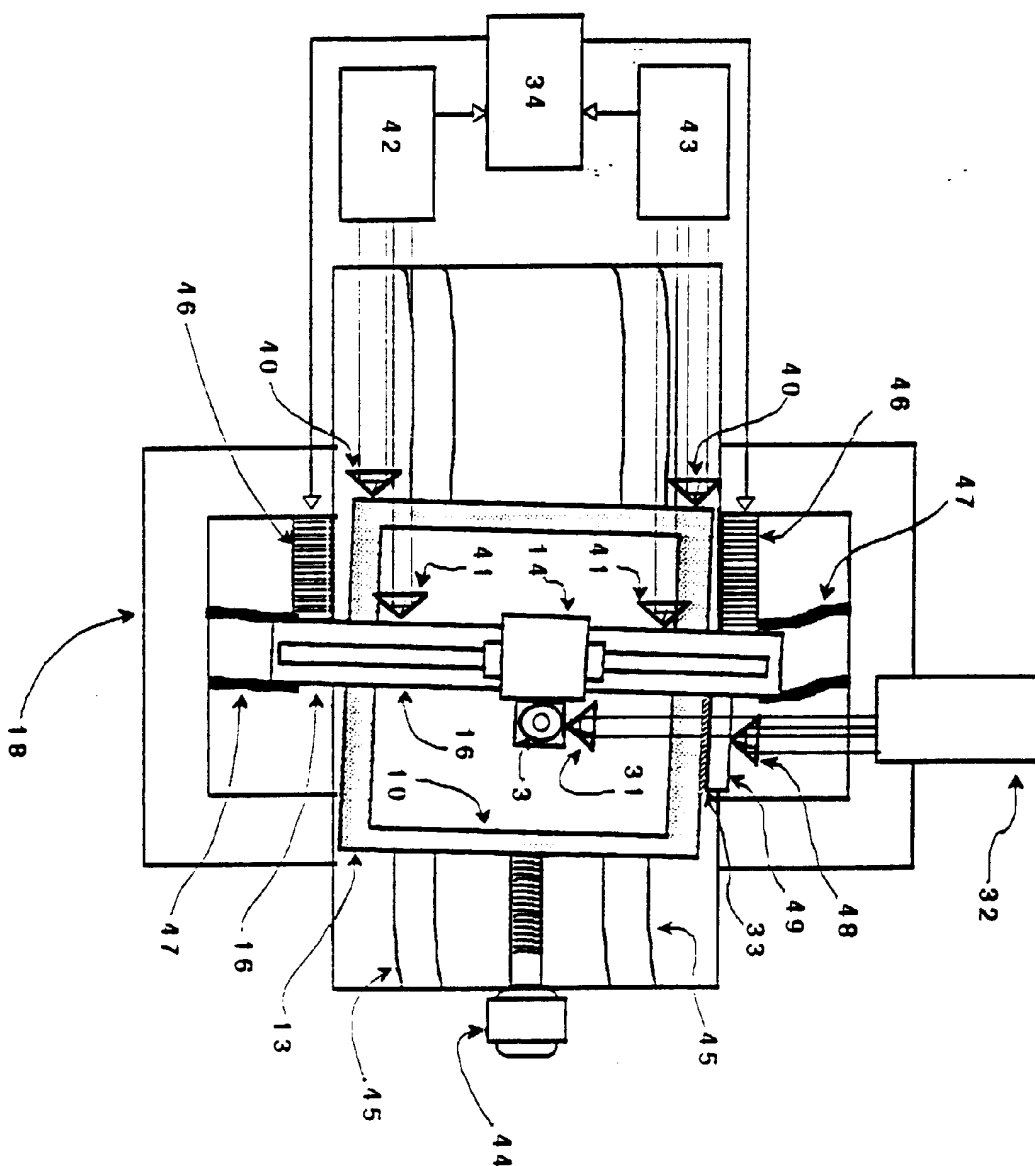


Fig. 4

